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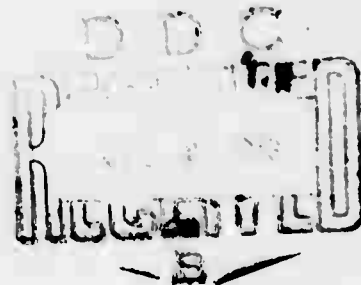
NOTE N-726(R)

CENTER CITY TRANSPORTATION:  
SUMMARY OF THE NATIONAL URBAN COALITION SEMINAR

Minneapolis, Minnesota  
May 4-5, 1970

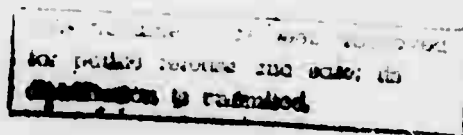
Elizabeth Parker

May 1970



IDA  
URBAN MASS TRANSPORTATION PROJECT

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In connection with the Center City Transportation Program (CCTP), the National Urban Coalition (formerly Urban America) organized eight seminars designed to establish national participation in the development of principles and procedures for improving center city transportation. The first five seminars included background information about the CCTP, descriptions of the projects planned by the ADL five-cities effort, and information about UMTA projects and programs. The final three seminars were organized to address the respective needs, priorities, problems and alternative solutions in the 21 cities. The Denver seminar included small cities, the Boston seminar was directed toward examining the situation in large cities, and the final seminar in Minneapolis addressed issues in the medium sized cities.<sup>1</sup>

The 21 cities have been designated, by IDA, as Category I, II, or III cities on the basis of population density and present development of the transportation system. In Category I cities, public transportation provides relatively limited service, primarily to non-drivers, and the approach to urban transportation remains directed toward accommodating

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<sup>1</sup>Information from the previous seminars is reported in IDA Notes N-660 (Atlanta), N-687 (San Francisco), N-668 (Washington, D.C.), N-694 (Evaluation), N-706 (Denver), and N-714 (Boston).

the automobile. To some extent, the needs of non-drivers are being ignored as are the long-term consequences of auto-oriented solutions. These cities are characterized by low density, dispersed activity centers, scattered trip patterns, and no readily identifiable center city.

Category II cities are moving toward solutions to develop and to improve public transit. The current needs of these cities include center city projects similar to those being developed in the current five-city effort, which are oriented toward decongesting the downtown area by providing fringe parking and some kind of shuttle or circulation system which can move people or goods to and about the center city area.

The Category III cities have well-developed transit systems which are used by a wide spectrum of the population. The major transportation projects in these cities are associated with improving or extending existing systems, increasing efficiency and amenities of current systems, providing high capacity people movers in the center city, improving interfaces among existing systems, and developing a more effective goods distribution system. Of all the cities considered in the program, the transportation improvements in the Category III cities require the most extensive and expensive projects, for which financing and planning are complex.

The summary of the Minneapolis seminar constitutes a part of IDA's on-going examination of the CCTP. It includes a discussion of Federal funding and Federal selection criteria, priority center city transportation projects as reported by the National Urban Coalition, and examples of center city projects. The seminar was limited to the following nine cities: Cleveland, Detroit, Houston, Kansas City, Los Angeles, Miami,

Milwaukee, Minneapolis and New Orleans. Some characteristics of these cities are shown in Table 1. Cleveland, with its relatively high density and extensive transit system, was placed into the category of a transit-oriented city.

TABLE 1. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NINE CITIES

CITY	U.S. RANK <sup>1</sup>	1967 SMSA <sup>2</sup> POPULATION (000)	1960 CENTRAL CITY POPULATION <sup>3</sup> PER SQUARE MILE <sup>3</sup>	TRANSIT SUBSIDY 1967-1969
<u>CATEGORY II</u>				
DETROIT	5	4,114	11,964	YES
HOUSTON	14	1,788	2,860	NO
KANSAS CITY	24	1,214	3,664	NO <sup>4</sup>
LOS ANGELES	2	6,857	5,638	NO <sup>5</sup>
MIAMI	26	1,114	8,529	NO
MILWAUKEE	18	1,342	8,137	NO
MINNEAPOLIS	15	1,636	7,326	NO
NEW ORLEANS	29	1,059	3,157	NO <sup>6</sup>
<u>CATEGORY III</u>				
CLEVELAND	11	2,050	10,789	NO

<sup>1</sup>Bureau of Census, 1968.

<sup>2</sup>1968 Statistical Abstract of the United States.

<sup>3</sup>Bureau of Census, 1960.

<sup>4</sup>UNTA Technical Study Grant.

<sup>5</sup>State and Federal Assistance for Designing and Planning Rapid Transit Program.

<sup>6</sup>The Bus Company Also Operates Electricity and Gas Service and Uses the Savings Thereof to Offset Some Transit Losses.



## II. FEDERAL FUNDING FOR MASS TRANSPORTATION

The pending public transportation legislation is directed toward city requirements for substantial Federal financial assistance and longer-term funding commitments on the part of the Federal government. Primarily because there is no on-going source of user funds for public transit, such as those available for the Federal Highway Trust Fund, the Department of Transportation (DOT) chose to pursue a contract authority approach rather than the establishment of a trust fund.<sup>1</sup>

A major change in the approach to highway and mass transit funding may occur when the Highway Act expires in the fall of 1972. There has been some consideration of including new components to make the highway program more palatable to non-highway interests -- such as the busways program, TOPICS, highway safety and peripheral parking. All of these elements are logically connected with the highway program. Instead of the current 90-10 funding ratio, the new act probably would include a funding ratio closer to 70-30. This change is in the direction of equalizing the highway and transit formulas so as to eliminate the current highway bias.

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<sup>1</sup>On May 10, 1970, The Washington Post reported that Transportation Secretary, John A. Volpe, "personally would favor a transportation trust fund to replace the present highway user fund."

DOT has not taken an official position regarding operating federal subsidies for mass transit, however there is a strong reluctance to consider this approach. Problems encountered in both the maritime and aviation industries highlight the complexities involved in federal subsidy programs. Nevertheless, many cities have subsidized local bus and rail operations for a number of years, but there has been no uniform approach to these subsidy schemes.

It is of some interest to note the unique subsidy scheme which is used in New Orleans. The transit operation (wholly within the city) is operated by a public service corporation which also operates the electric and gas utilities. The cost of supplying these utilities has decreased over time due to engineering and managerial efficiencies. The increased earnings have been used to offset the losses of the transit operation. Until recently, the fare in New Orleans has been 10 cents. Last year the transit deficit reached a total of \$8.3 million which was almost half of the total operating cost of the company. Unfortunately, the increased economies of the energy business are not sufficient to offset this loss, and the fare has been raised to 15 cents.

In contrast to other cities, mass transit ridership in New Orleans has increased since the 1940 decade. The city seems to feel that the subsidy is worthwhile. Moreover, it is interesting to note that electric and gas costs in the city are the third lowest of all cities above 300,000 population.

### III. PRIORITY CENTER CITY TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

The examination of transportation issues in these cities included the following eight areas: (1) access to the center city, (2) goods distribution, (3) auto intercept schemes, (4) pedestrian circulation systems, (5) planning needs, (6) information systems and marketing, (7) capital improvement requirements, and (8) model cities service. The summary of these requirements was presented by the National Urban Coalition. Although the projects discussed may be representative of center city transportation needs, they are not necessarily first priority transportation requirements of the respective urban areas.

The reasons advanced for the inventory of projects in the Category II cities were to find whether there is a complementarity or commonality with projects from the five-city program, to stimulate capital grants funding, and to discern the relationship of these projects to Federal criteria in an effort to estimate the probability of acquiring funding.

Access is the predominant problem in Category II cities. Without access, circulation is almost irrelevant. None of the cities inventoried had goods distribution proposals underway. Most of the plans and projects in these cities included fringe parking - transit proposals (auto intercept), exclusive right-of-way for buses, people movers or minibuses for the downtown area, separated pedestrian crossings or walkways, capital improvements (particularly bus shelters), and improved bus information systems. A number of cities also expressed a need for planning funds.

There was some concern on the part of the participants that the list did not reflect city needs, i.e., that the sampling process was not adequate (information primarily from telephone conversations with selected people in the cities). Further, many of the city representatives felt that center city projects might conflict with regional objectives, thus by dividing transportation needs into various categories there was a danger of fragmenting problems. Others suggested that the projects were related solely to access for suburbanites, while ignoring the needs of the central core population.

The discussion about Federally funded design concept teams was inconclusive. However, the cities agreed that some means of exchanging information among themselves, either through the Federal Government or some other agency, would be desirable. It was felt that technical information could be distributed through written reports, whereas information about the planning implementation process required discussion.

#### IV. FEDERAL SELECTION CRITERIA

The present Federal selection criteria were outlined as follows:

##### Research, Demonstration & Development

1. Transfer
2. Implementation potential

##### Technical Studies

1. Support capital grant application
2. Improve service
3. Consistent with long-range plans for improvement

##### Capital Grants

1. Keep service: small cities, large cities
2. Improve service with existing type of equipment:  
small cities, large cities
3. New systems (emphasis on new service rather than  
new technology)

The discussion of the Federal selection criteria and ADL's list of 25 criteria surfaced the following basic problems:

- In addition to the problem of establishing national priorities (specifically, an urban growth policy), there is a major problem in translating general policies into specific criteria, apart from the consideration of individual city situations.

- UMTA does not appear to have defined objectives or policy, therefore any criteria established under these conditions is meaningless as it cannot be examined in terms of meeting objectives.
- Even a "policy" of "no policy" has an impact on developments. Previous transportation policy, with significant financial support for highways and no provision for mass transportation, resulted in the present bias toward highway solutions. In effect, the political system forces distribution of federal funds.
- From the criteria listed above, the UMTA approach appears to support a renewal concept (i.e. save buses) rather than the development of new systems to improve mobility. Although this approach might bring short-term results, it could have a negative impact on long-term transportation solutions in urban areas.
- The development of technology in new transportation systems may be trivial in terms of the problems of marketing systems.
- UMTA might benefit in the long term by making longer range commitments to demonstrations. One to two year demonstrations frequently do not prove or disprove the viability of transportation systems.

- UMTA should examine whether systems to be developed are going to be self-sustaining. This does not imply that a system would have to be self-sustaining, however it does suggest the need to examine the relative benefits of various systems and the future implied commitment.
- UMTA might consider a policy of concentrating funds in a few systems rather than spreading funds around thinly, thereby not accomplishing anything major for specific systems.
- Transportation systems must be examined in terms of their effect on regional growth and development.
- Subjective criteria should not be eliminated in favor of measurable objective criteria as previous experience has demonstrated the relative importance of subjective considerations.

## V. ATLANTA: OPERATION INTERCEPT

In Atlanta, the CCTP Team worked with the Central Atlanta Progress and the local transit company to establish a short-range transportation alternative that they felt would be consistent with the proposed line-haul system. Mr. Alan Sloane of ADL presented some information about Operation Intercept, as an example of one auto intercept approach developed through the CCTP. The system consists of two peripheral parking lots about one-half mile from the CBD (one at the Atlanta Stadium and one at the Atlanta Civic Center) with bus service to the CBD during the morning and evening rush hours. It was not clear why this particular example was selected as it apparently has had no impact on the basic traffic problem. According to Mr. Sloane, the system currently is operating at about one-quarter capacity and the fare level recovers only 25 percent of the cost. Further, it was reported that the information campaign for service could have been more effective, although some \$40,000 was spent in publicizing the service. In addition, there is no saving in travel time for the user.

One representative from Milwaukee reported informally on a similar service in Milwaukee that has had markedly different results, however that system intercepts autos farther from the CBD, hence it utilizes the freeway system. In contrast to the Atlanta project, travel times were cut in half, fares cover the operating cost, and publicity per new line amounts to about \$1,000.



In line with the growing interest in auto intercept schemes, more specific information should be collected about those systems already in operation to determine such factors as the effect of fares, frequency of service, travel time, publicity, exclusive right-of-way, and the interaction between close-in intercept and suburban intercept concepts.

## VI. MINNEAPOLIS: NICOLLET MALL

The Nicollet Mall is an 8 block long private development in downtown Minneapolis. The street has been restricted to public vehicles (buses, taxis, and service vehicles), although no cross streets have been closed. Approximately one-half million was spent on beautification and another one-half million mostly for bus shelters. No general public purpose money was used for the mall; instead, special assessments were made on the abutting property. Maintenance costs for the mall are estimated at \$80 to \$100 thousand per year. The area is 95 to 98 percent retail, hence most activity occurs during the day. A 10 to 16 percent increase in actual sales, above inflation, has occurred.

The mall has also had an impact on the transit system. One of every four transit users boards or deboards along the mall, however there has been some opposition to the continued operation of large buses along the mall. A minibus system will be initiated in the downtown area (a DOT grant will pay 2/3 of the cost of the buses).

Prior to closing this street to private traffic, it carried about 15 to 18,000 vehicles per day. It was estimated that the adjoining streets could absorb the extra vehicles. Nevertheless, the negotiation process to close the street took two years.

Several second-level walkways have been constructed by private interests in the downtown area. Apparently, ground floor level values have been achieved at the second level without diminishing previous ground floor level values. Minneapolis would like to develop the skywalks, with Federal assistance, into an integrated downtown circulation system connected with public parking.

## VII. SUMMARY

The major transportation requirement of the Category II cities is to improve access to the center city. Most of the representatives felt that circulation systems should be planned along with improved access. Current approaches centered around fringe-parking/bus transit proposals and exclusive right-of-way for buses. With the exception of Cleveland, these cities are concerned primarily about improving existing bus service, although some Category II cities (not represented at the conference) are in the process of examining bus-rail alternatives. The transportation proposals and projects in the Category II cities include the following items:

- Fringe-parking/bus transit
- Exclusive bus right-of-way
- Bus shelters
- Improved bus information systems
- People movers, minibuses and separated pedestrian crossings or walkways for improved center city circulation
- Planning funds

A number of the representatives suggested that by dividing transportation needs into various categories, i.e. center city, there was a danger of fragmenting problems and implementing circulation systems that

were incompatible with long-range plans. Because of the emphasis by the cities on improving access (beyond the center city), much of the work being done in the CCTP is not of first priority to these cities. Further, many of these cities face serious financial problems vis-a-vis the local bus companies, yet none of the CCTP proposals is directed specifically at this problem.

The city representatives stressed the need for DOT to establish a communication system or central location where cities could obtain information about programs and projects in other cities. Some representatives also felt that DOT should have more first-hand contact with the cities (currently constrained by a lack of manpower and money).

The discussion of federal criteria was blurred by the fact that there was no clear understanding of federal objectives and/or policy vis-a-vis urban transportation. There was a feeling that the present UMTA approach tends to favor a renewal concept rather than the development of new systems, which could have a negative impact on long-term transportation solutions. Another problem cited at the conference was that spreading limited UMTA money among cities, while politically expedient, may be self-defeating over the long run in that major systems cannot be developed with a shot-gun approach. Also, short commitments such as one to two-year demonstration programs do not prove or disprove the viability of various transportation systems. Another shortcoming is the failure to assess whether a system will be self-sustaining, which bears directly on implied future commitments for continued operations.

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